



Review

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a feeling for the life that was lived in them—the treatment of walls and woodwork and other elements in their decoration and stylistic characteristics springing from the people. At the beginning of each division an introduction sets the pieces both in their chronological order and in their social setting. Before each picture the text helps to emphasize the essential elements and the progression in form and treatment depicted.

In these days when there is a growing interest in regaining something of the skill and satisfaction of craftsmanship, and an increasing need for people to use their hands and hearts in some creative hobby, several features of this work are of especial value. These consist of fifty-five detailed working drawings, the discussions of the technique of joinery, and of the types of woods and tools. Whether they be used as easily followed guides or not, the drawings add to one's appreciation of the ingenuity and forthrightness of the craftsmen who fashioned these humble but endearing articles for use and decoration.

Naturally important for the collector—whether connoisseur or beginner—the antique dealer who has any desire to be truly informed and the decorator, this volume should not be classed as simply another reference work on period furniture, lest it be missed by the social historian, the antiquarian, and many others who will find in it much of interest and value. It is fortunate indeed that this well-produced republication from an earlier limited edition brings such informative and appealing material into more general circulation.

Boston, Massachusetts.

BERTRAM K. LITTLE.

George Sylvester Morris: His Philosophical Career and Theistic Idealism. By Marc Edmund Jones. (Philadelphia: David McKay Company. 1948. Pp. xvi, 430. \$3.75.)

In a recent work Professor Morton G. White points out that John Dewey "was first a disciple of G. S. Morris, the obscure American idealist," and that Thorstein Veblen, "by an interesting coincidence, was also a student at Johns Hopkins, and he too listened to Morris." There are good grounds, therefore, for rescuing what this book's jacket calls "a New England thinker" from "a

half century of unmerited oblivion." Dr. Jones has undertaken the task with a partisan enthusiasm which frequently carries him too far in the opposite direction, and by omitting any reference to Morris's idealistic contemporaries makes his hero appear several sizes larger than life.

The first chapter, entitled "New England Contribution," leaves no room for doubt about Morris's early environment. He was born in Norwich, Vermont, just across the river from Hanover, where he attended college, and within twenty miles of Royalton, where he taught school before enlisting in the Union Army. In those days, as his earlier biographer, R. M. Wenley, pointed out, "New England was a relentless school of compulsory labor—a land of 'chores.'" The future philosopher was shaped by this "frontier development of individual resourcefulness, and of a highly efficient group integration" in a large family (six generations of Morrises averaged 10.3 children per generation), together with a stern religious austerity tempered only by music and his mother's taste for literature. But from the time he entered Union Theological Seminary in the fall of 1864, his career ran its course outside New England, chiefly at the University of Michigan.

Morris's philosophy is a dynamic variety of theistic idealism compounded mainly of Fichte and Hegel, but nevertheless rooted in Aristotle and modified by the rigors of pioneer living. It was of a piece with his life, since it sprang from a strong evangelical urge to communicate what he had found significant in his own experience. There are overtones of existentialism in his emphasis upon the self as center. "The key to Morris," says the author, "is interaction. . . . Men live and work . . . as they are constantly reconditioning both themselves and their world. . . . Fact and value are two sides of the same coin. . . . Only experience provides a unifying potential for the fragmentations and divisions on every hand. . . ." (pp. 321-322). But he was unable to get either President Gilman or G. Stanley Hall to see this experientialism as natural science rather than as moral philosophy. American thought turned away from Germanic idealism, and Morris slipped into oblivion. But when American intellectual history comes to be written in greater detail, it may well be that such names as Morris and Hickok and Garman and Lloyd will loom considerably larger than those of most contemporary teachers of philosophy. For those men had the flavor of

prophets speaking earnestly on major issues, and not the insipidity of specialists afraid to speak their minds.

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HAROLD A. LARRABEE.

Changing Patterns in American Civilization. By Dixon Wecter, F. O. Matthiessen, Detlev W. Bronk, Brand Blanshard and George F. Thomas. Preface by Robert E. Spiller. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1949. Pp. xi, 176. \$2.50.)

This volume consists of five lectures given as the first series of annual Benjamin Franklin Lectures at the University of Pennsylvania. The topic set the five speakers is roughly suggested by the title of the collection. More specifically, as Robert E. Spiller states in his preface, the lectures were meant to be "an attempt, in the broadest of terms, to understand and evaluate the civilization of the United States in the twentieth century."

This was an ambitious undertaking. The selected cast were of exceptional repute and wisdom. And their lectures were each admirable. But when printed as essays, they don't quite add up; the changing patterns don't coalesce into any one intelligible pattern. And most of the essays turn out to be summaries rather than attempts to answer what Professor Spiller suggested as the "single question: Who are we?"

As lectures, however, all of these must have been both pleasurable and enlightening. Each is, in its particular field, a perspicacious account of the main developments of the past half-century. In "The Contemporary Scene," Dixon Wecter expertly sketches recent changes in attitudes toward social security and planning, toward the position of women and of labor, toward our responsibilities in a frightened world. Detlev W. Bronk gives a wise defense of the scientist against critics who—panic-stricken at A and H bombs—would blame science for what men have done with the knowledge they obtained through scientific researches. George F. Thomas describes the reaction against the "liberal" and "modern" religion of the first part of the century, leading to the renewal of theology, of piety, and of our sense of sin, without a loss of the social conscience stressed by the liberals. Brand Blanshard's lecture is outstanding for the felicity and wit with which he explains and judges recent philosophical meanderings, from idealisms through